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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet describes the Texas Reading Initiative, a comprehensive plan aimed at improving reading instruction in Texas and begun after a challenge was issued by Governor George W. Bush that each and every child must learn to read. It lists the 8 key elements that were established to guide the initiative (including increasing awareness of students' reading skill levels in K-3, showcasing model reading programs, motivating school districts to make pro-reading decisions, and stimulating private sector initiatives). It then describes 10 specific actions taken, or programs developed, as part of the initiative. (RS)

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The Texas Reading Initiative.

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The Texas Reading Initiative is a comprehensive plan aimed at improving reading instruction in Texas. In January 1996 Governor George W. Bush challenged Texans to focus on the most basic of education goals – teaching children to read. The goal set by the Governor was clear – every child, each and every child must learn to read. For the goal to be accomplished parents, educators, school board trustees, administrators, legislators, business and community leaders must all be committed to the goal and be willing to contribute their support. It is our hope that Texas children become independent, lifelong learners and for this to happen it is imperative that they all be taught to read carefully and effectively in our classrooms.

Eight key elements were established to guide the initiative.

★ Increase awareness of students' reading skill levels in Kindergarten through Grade 3.

★ Promote reading programs as priority recipients of Academics 2000 funding.

★ Ask the 75th Texas Legislature to fund statewide intensive reading programs.

★ Showcase model reading programs.

★ Encourage the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board to support reading instruction.

★ Encourage the State Board for Educator Certification to support reading.

★ Motivate school districts to make pro-reading decisions.

★ Stimulate private sector initiatives.

The Texas Education Agency in collaboration with the Education Service Centers and school districts have responded to the Governor's challenge by focusing efforts toward beginning reading instruction.

"Reading is to the mind what food is to the body. Nothing is more basic or more essential."

Governor George W. Bush

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THE TEXAS READING INITIATIVE

The Goal of the Reading Initiative:

All students will be reading on grade level or above by the end of third grade and continue to read on grade level throughout their schooling.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL OR WRITE:

The Texas Reading Initiative
Suite 2-185
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494
(800) 819-5713

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★ The Texas Education Agency developed and distributed an informal assessment for student in Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2. The inventory is a diagnostic assessment tool that is designed to assist teachers with ongoing assessment. The inventory assesses a child's graphonemic awareness, phonemic awareness, oral reading ability, and comprehension skills. The inventories were distributed in August 1996, to all Texas public school districts and can be obtained through the Regional Education Service Centers or through the TEA Publications office.

★ The Texas Education Agency has focused Academics 2000 funds to promote beginning reading instruction. The Texas Education Agency has allocated funds to school districts and Regional Education Service Centers for beginning reading programs. The funds are being distributed through competitive grants. Information on the funding cycle, programs funded and copies of the report are available through the internet at http://www.tea.state.tx.us. or by calling the Reading Hotline at (800) 819-5713.

★ The University of Texas at Austin has been awarded a grant to serve as the Center for Reading and Language Arts Professional Development in conjunction with Region 13 and the Austin Independent School District. This Center will serve to coordinate statewide training and professional development. Information about the Center and the materials they are developing can be accessed through the internet at http://www.tenet.edu/teks/language_arts.

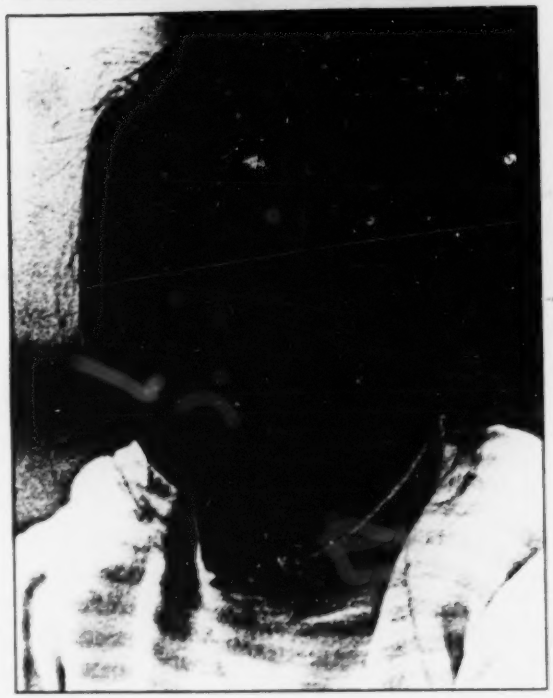
★ Region 13 Education Service Center Mentor School Network in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency have identified 12 campuses for their commitment in teaching children to read. All campuses selected had TAAS scores of 85% or higher in the third and fourth grade. All campuses selected reflect a diverse student population both in terms of socioeconomic background and ethnicity. The Spotlight schools have been working with TEA and Region 13 staff to put together material that highlights what practices are working on their campuses. A list of the Spotlight schools can be obtained by calling the Reading Hotline at (800) 819-5713.

★ The T-Star network has aired a series of six video broadcasts that highlight promising practices in reading and give an overview of what the state is doing to support reading instruction. To order copies of the broadcasts please contact the T-Star coordinator at your Education Service Center or call Region 20 at (800) 234-1245.

★ Each Regional Education Service Center has designated a "reading initiative contact." The "reading contacts" have been disseminating information and providing assistance to school districts who are interested in the reading initiative. A list of the contacts can be obtained by calling the Reading Hotline at (800) 819-5713.

★ The consensus document *Good Practice: Implications for Reading Instruction* has been developed by a committee of educators representing diverse literacy organizations throughout Texas. The committee developed a policy statement about balanced reading instruction and its implications for the delivery of reading instruction, implications for professional development and implications for community involvement. Copies of the document can be obtained through the Reading Hotline (800) 819-5713.

★ The Texas Education Agency has been working with state and national leaders in the area of beginning reading and has developed a document that outlines critical elements of research-based reading programs and features of classrooms that support beginning reading instruction. The document will be available the summer of 1997 through the TEA Publications office.



★ Places such as Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin, Midland/Odessa, Houston, and the Rio Grande Valley (just to name a few) have hosted "reading summits." The purpose of the reading summits is to bring together community members, school administrators, educators and business leaders to talk about reading instruction and what they can do to support education in their area.

★ The Telecommunications Infrastructure Board (TIF) is providing grants and loans to schools and universities to purchase telecommunications equipment, computer networks and computer equipment. This equipment will support reading instruction by allowing educators to access and share information about effective reading programs.